

Radiation Oncology CONNECTIONS

Winter 2024/2025



Department of Human Oncology
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

- >> PATIENT CARE
- >> RESEARCH
- >> EDUCATION

Eastpark Medical Center Opens on Madison's East Side



In October 2024, the new Eastpark Medical Center (EMC) opened its doors to patients, offering access to some of the world's most advanced radiation oncology technologies.

The new EMC nearly doubles the space available for radiation oncology activities and adds three new linear accelerators, CT and MRI simulators, two HDR brachytherapy suites, and a comprehensive state-of-the-art proton therapy program with two treatment vaults.

In addition to cancer care provided by the UW Health I Carbone Cancer Center, EMC offers more than 40 types of specialty care for adults, including innovative clinical trials, women's complex care, advanced imaging, and laboratory services.

With a proven track record as an innovator in patient care, the UW-Madison Department of Human Oncology and UW Health are the first academic center in the world to announce the implementation of upright treatment technology in its proton therapy program. This technology will improve the patient experience for both children and adults by enabling them to remain in a more natural upright position during treatment.

(continued on page 3)

Inside this issue

- Eastpark Medical Center1
- Messge from the Chair2
- Eastpark Medical Center cont.3
- Zachary Morris, Chairman..... 4
- Meet our Residents..... 6
- Paul Harari, Gold Medal Winner7
- Giving / Social Media..... 8

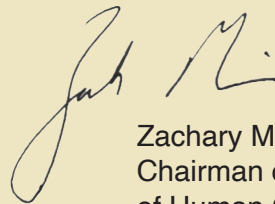
Message from the Chair // Zachary Morris, MD, PhD

Welcome to Radiation Oncology **CONNECTIONS** - a revitalized newsletter of the University of Wisconsin Department of Human Oncology (DHO)! With so many positive changes, we are thrilled to reconnect and share updates on the leadership, achievements, and growth of DHO in this issue.

I was truly honored to be selected as Chair of the Department of Human Oncology. I aim to build upon the remarkable progress of my predecessor in elevating DHO to the highest stature internationally. I will do my utmost to serve this department and our patients. I ask for your support in this effort. DHO extends heartfelt congratulations to Paul Harari, recipient of the ASTRO Gold Medal Award! Recognizing lifetime achievement and contributions, ASTRO could not have selected a more deserving recipient. We thank Dr. Harari for his 17 years as chair of DHO – thanks Paul for all you have done for all of us!

We're growing! The faculty and staff of DHO now support two "main" campuses starting with this fall's opening of UW Health's Eastpark Medical Center (EMC). This state-of-the-art facility houses three LINACs, two HDR vaults, CT and MRI simulators, and beautiful clinic space. Our proton center will open at EMC in 2026 under the leadership of Proton Center Director Ben Durkee and Proton Physics Director Minglei Kang.

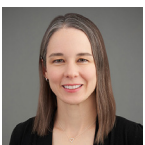
Enjoy this issue of Radiation Oncology **CONNECTIONS**. We welcome your feedback - have a story to share or a contribution you wish to make to our mission? Please email comms@humonc.wisc.edu or visit humonc.wisc.edu/make-a-gift/.



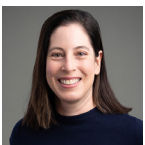
Zachary Morris, MD, PhD
Chairman of the Department
of Human Oncology



Newly Appointed Associate Chairs



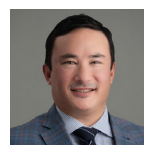
Bethany Anderson, MD
Associate Chairman for Clinical Operations



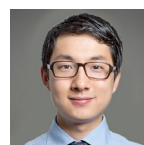
Kristin Bradley, MD
Associate Chairman for Education and Training



Carri Glide-Hurst, PhD, DABR, FAAPM
Associate Chairman for Physics



Randy Kimple, MD, PhD, FASTRO, MBA
Associate Chairman for Faculty and Business Development



Shuang (George) Zhao, MD
Associate Chairman for Research

(Eastpark Medical Center - continued from page 1)

Proton therapy, a state-of-the-art treatment in radiation oncology, delivers pinpoint accuracy to destroy cancer cells, even in hard-to-reach tumors near vital organs and tissues. Traditionally, patients receive treatment lying flat on a table, which can pose challenges for some.

By partnering with Leo Cancer Care, a Middleton, WI-based medical device company, EMC will offer selected patients upright proton therapy. This approach is expected to provide benefits such as easier breathing, reduced gastric reflux, and enhanced interaction with the care team throughout treatment.

“The precision of proton therapy brings the opportunity to reduce radiation exposure to healthy surrounding tissues,” said Dr. Paul Harari, former chair of the Department of Human Oncology at UW School of Medicine and Public Health and a radiation oncologist at UW Health. “For children requiring radiation therapy and adults with tumors near vital organs such as the heart, brain, spinal cord, or eyes, this treatment offers the chance to minimize normal tissue damage and improve long-term quality of life.”

With demand for high-quality health care at an all-time high, and many patients traveling to UW Health from outside Madison, EMC’s opening comes at an ideal time. The center provides increased and more convenient access to appointments, therapies, treatments, testing, and clinical trials, expanding possibilities for patients’ futures.

The Department of Human Oncology is currently treating over 200 patients daily across EMC, University Hospital, and other radiation oncology locations within the UW Health system. The Proton Therapy Center is set to open in early 2026, further expanding treatment options for pediatric and adult patients in Wisconsin and beyond.



Eastpark Medical Center Fast Facts:

475,000+
square-feet

7
story facility

600+
staff

40
types of specialty
care

3
new linear
accelerators

2
proton therapy
treatment rooms

2X
the space available
for brachytherapy

Largest
medical facility
opened across the
nation in 2024



Zachary Morris, MD, PhD was selected as the next Chairman of the Department of Human Oncology and began in the role in June 2024. Dr. Morris is a radiation oncologist at UW Health, cancer biologist within the Department and associate professor at the School of Medicine and Public Health. He stepped into the role following the 17-year Chairman appointment of Dr. Paul Harari.

Dr. Morris joined the University of Wisconsin- Madison faculty in 2016 after completing his Residency, also at UW-Madison. He was selected as vice chair of the department two years later and since has been an integral contributor to strategic planning for faculty recruitment, physician compensation planning, diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, operational planning for the UW Health Eastpark Medical Center facility which opened in October 2024, and more.

We sat down with Dr. Morris several months into his new role to learn more about his transition and hear his plans for the future.

1. *What has been the most surprising thing you've encountered since entering this role in June?*

I didn't realize how strong the network of collective chairpersons is between the clinical and basic science programs within UW SMPH. It's been incredibly valuable to be included in and engaged with that group over the past 6 months. I've been integrated into a series of meetings with this group on both the health system side and with the SMPH Dean's office. There are also more casual get-togethers in a social setting that have provided a great opportunity to gain perspective on similar challenges that confront department chairs. I've been able to learn from some

of the more senior individuals in the group and to meet and share common experiences with those who are new in their role like I am.

This has provided a great opportunity for new collaboration and collegiality amongst other department chairs and also a chance for mentorship. It speaks to the kind of environment we have here at UW. There's so much willingness to collaborate and mentor with one another. As a new chair I wasn't sure where I would find the kind of a network I needed, and it's been this group of departmental chairs that have delivered. They are very open and supportive, and it's been a good place to ask questions about how things are done in other departments, and to compare and contrast approaches. This group has been an incredibly helpful to me in the Chairman role.

2. *What are you most excited about in the next 1, 3, 5 years as Chairman of the Department of Human Oncology?*

I stepped into this role amid enormous change and growth for our department and the one and three year trajectories are largely in motion; I'm excited to see those through.

In the next year I'm really excited to see us knock it out of the park as it relates to providing care at the main UW hospital clinic and the new Eastpark Medical Center. We are already doing that amazingly well, we had such a nice launch, thanks entirely to our faculty and staff who have navigated that. There are no doubt still going to be some challenges that emerge over the course of the next one year as we see the differences in the addition of another main campus location. We're already providing outstanding care at Eastpark, but

we are going to have the opportunity to innovate as we adapt to having two main campuses for providing patient care.

The three-year time frame puts us into the opening of proton therapy here in our department (second quarter of 2026). We have an outstanding team in place to ensure that we can launch that program in a way that we will all be proud of – on time with great efficiency and being able to deliver high quality patient care from the very beginning. A lot of those processes are well underway, and construction is moving along. However, there remains a large scope of work to be navigated and that's got to take the focus of our three-year agenda. This is an enormous opportunity and something that I'm so happy that our department is going to be able to do. For many years I wished and felt that we should have proton therapy here because our patients deserved it, the state deserved it, and our health system and Cancer Center merited it. The focus of the next three years will be developing this world class proton center with industry-leading capabilities for treatment precision in our gantry room and with the additional innovative aspect of providing upright proton therapy in our second treatment room – something we will be among the first in the world to do. This is directly aligned with our clinical as well as our research and educational missions as a department so it's a perfect three-year objective that I couldn't be more excited about it.

Looking to the five-year plan, this is where I feel that we could take some time and look at ourselves as a department and say what can we be? What are the long term opportunities here? My hope is to see us as a department build on our strengths in research and innovation to bring forward the field of radiation medicine to be as impactful and as safe of a treatment as it can possibly be for patients with cancer or other diseases. Our department can grow its research mission to be a part of developing new approaches to proton beam or external beam radiation, personalization of radiotherapy and theranostics, and integration of drug therapies with radiation. We have strong research innovators and a core of discovery within our department and we have translational researchers who can take such discoveries and move them into clinical practice. My five-year vision for this department is guided by a belief that we can and will be increasing our role as an international leader in improving clinical care for patients on the back of innovative translational research.

3. **Where do you look for inspiration or mentorship in your own career?**

Inspiration is abundant in our field because what we do - the patient care, education, and research - is so meaningful. While I've had to reduce my clinical

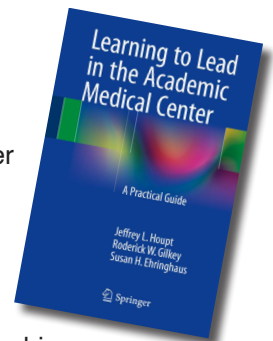
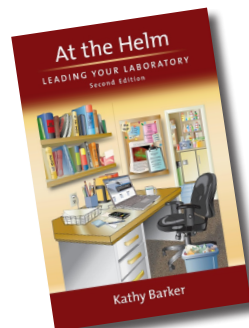
footprint since becoming Chairman, I'm glad to still be able to see patients because to me, the clinic and the encounters with patients is a never ending source of inspiration. We're in a field I wish didn't exist but we need to because cancer is such a difficult disease and our patients are navigating life altering circumstances. There's been enormous progress in the field but the need for further progress is apparent in all aspects of cancer care including disease control, side effects, emotional trauma, and socioeconomic impacts on patients and their families. We must continue to ask, "what can we do to better serve the patients"? It all comes down to that – it's the driving factor in what we do. It's why we need to improve our clinical care through research and why we invest so much energy in educating the next generation of leading providers.

I've been very fortunate to have started my career here at UW, as many of us have, as faculty under the leadership and chairmanship of Paul Harari. Paul is a transformational leader and there's no question that I've benefited enormously from his mentorship. I've also gained valuable mentorship from Paul Sondel after working in his lab, and Howard Bailey, former Director of the Carbone Cancer Center. Their insight and perspectives have been invaluable. I also believe strongly in peer mentorship and I learn constantly from other faculty across different domains of our department. I continue to seek out and benefit from those interactions with colleagues inside and outside of our department.

4. **Do you currently recommend any books on leadership or for those within academic medicine?**

I've received books from people I admire at different points in my career and two that stand out are **At The Helm** and **Learning to Lead in the Academic Medical Center**.

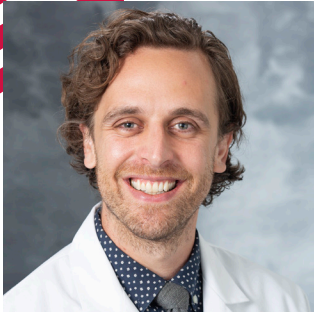
I received **At The Helm** from a mentor many years ago as I was launching my own independent lab. It is a book of advice on how to effectively and efficiently lead a laboratory. When I recently was named Chairman of the department, Dean Golden gave me a copy of **Learning to Lead**, which has been very insightful. I would recommend either of those to individuals on a similar career path as mine.



For a more general audience, consider **Noise** – an interesting read on how one can make better judgments and decisions from the information at hand.

Meet Our Residents!

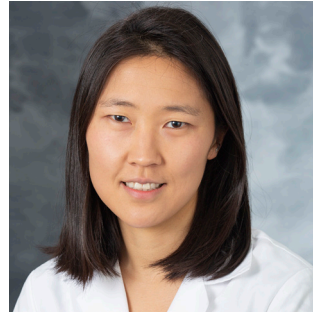
Radiation Oncology Residents



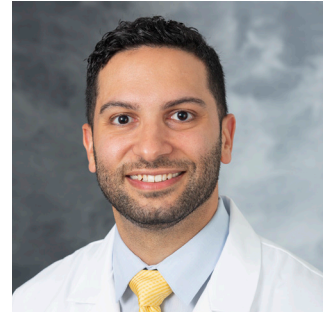
Colin Harari, MD
Post Graduate Trainee 5



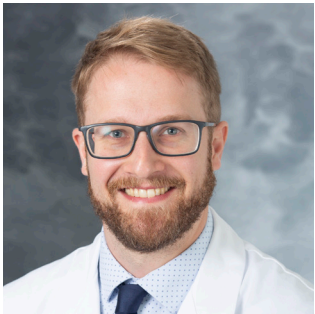
Hari Menon, MD
Post Graduate Trainee 5



Kaili Ranta, MD, PhD
Post Graduate Trainee 5



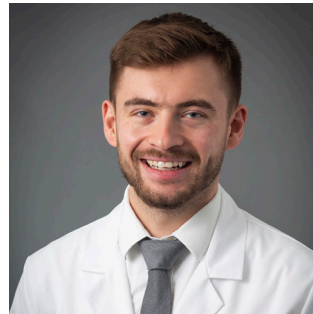
Mustafa Basree, DO
Post Graduate Trainee 4



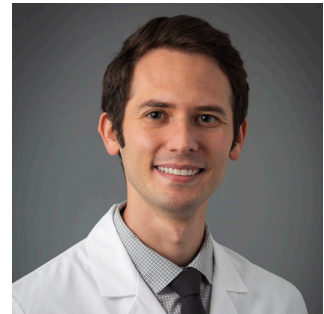
Bradley Eckelmann, MD, PhD
Post Graduate Trainee 4



S. Carson Callahan Jr, MD, PhD
Post Graduate Trainee 3



Matthew Charles, MD
Post Graduate Trainee 2

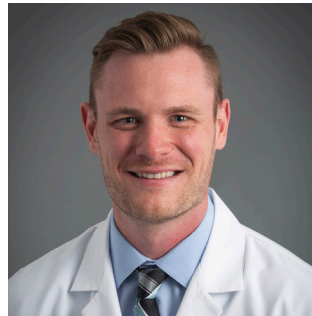


Trevor Wilson, MD
Post Graduate Trainee 2

Physics Residents



Carolyn Eckrich, MS
2nd Year Physics Resident



Eric Wallat, PhD
2nd Year Physics Resident



Laura Bennett, PhD
1st Year Physics Resident



Elissa Khoudary, MS
1st Year Physics Resident



Nicholas Lynch, PhD
1st Year Physics Resident

Would you like to learn more about our Residents?



Radiation Oncology Residents
←----- scan/click here



Physics Residents
←----- scan/click here

Dr. Paul Harari Receives Prestigious Gold Medal Award from ASTRO



“ If you are fortunate enough to love your field and love taking care of patients, incredible things can happen. ”

Paul Harari, MD, FASTRO, was honored October 1, 2024 by the American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO) as a recipient of the Gold Medal Award, ASTRO's highest honor. Alongside May Abdel-Wahab, MD, PhD, FASTRO, and Mack Roach III, MD, FASTRO, the trio were recognized as leaders in the field who have made significant contributions through patient care, research, teaching, mentorship and service throughout their careers.

Dr. Harari said, "Recognition from peers in the field you love is wonderful. This award reflects my good fortune to have had inspirational mentors and outstanding institutions at which to learn, practice medicine, perform research and gain leadership skills."

Dr. Harari recently completed 17 years as chairman of the Department of Human Oncology and currently serves as principal investigator for the Wisconsin H&N SPORE Grant which has been renewed through 2027.

Dr. Harari's contributions to the field, and to those who've crossed his path, are remarkable and we are delighted that he was honored in such a momentous way this past year.

The list of his career achievements is numerous.

- Delivered over 350 national and international invited lectures
- Authored more than 300 articles and book chapters
- Treated patients for over 35 years
- Served as President and Board Chair of ASTRO from 2017-2019
- Tripled research funding for the department during his time as Chairmen
- Served as director of the radiation oncology residency training program in the Department of Human Oncology
- His laboratory research program has been continuously funded for 34 years
- Earned multiple teacher of the year awards
- Designed and led multiple phase II and III international clinical trials that have impacted clinical practice in head and neck oncology
- Mentored dozens of students, residents, fellows, and faculty

Department of Human Oncology
Clinical Sciences Center
600 Highland Avenue
Madison, WI 53792

www.humonc.wisc.edu

Presorted
First Class Mail
U.S. Postage
PAID
UMS

Radiation Oncology **CONNECTIONS**

Address changes, subscription updates and
questions: comms@humonc.wisc.edu

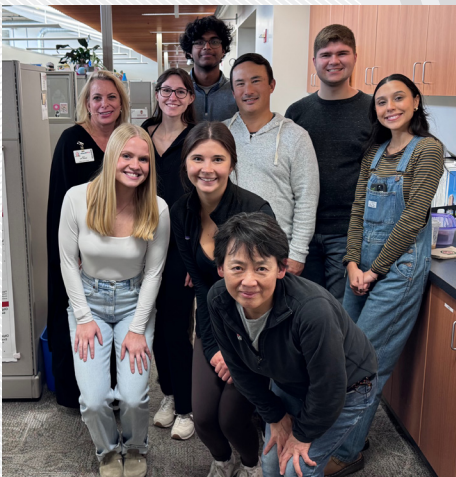
©2025 University of Wisconsin
Department of Human Oncology



Department of Human Oncology
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH



**School of Medicine
and Public Health**
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



The generosity of our philanthropic partners strengthens our clinical, research and educational endeavors. As we strive to develop world-class research and clinical programs, your gifts are essential to our success and allow us to explore novel research ideas, develop new methods for diagnosis and treatment, and enhance facilities as well as education.



Scan/click to
Make a Gift

Follow us on social media!



UWHumanOncology



uwhumanoncology

Questions/Comments?

Please reach out to us:
comms@humonc.wisc.edu